

Message Text

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APPROVED BY M/CT - AMBASSADOR ISHAM
EUR/WE - MR. MCKINLEY (SUBS)
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 089029

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS

SUBJECT: US POLICY ON RESPONDING TO ACTS OF TERRORISM

REF: (A) HOLMES/ISHAM TELCON 4/6/78
(B) STATE 283548 DATED DECEMBER 1975

1. POST MAY DRAW ON FOLLOWING RELEVANT SECTIONS OF DEPARTMENT'S GUIDELINES FOR RESPONSE TO TERRORIST INCIDENTS IN ITS CONSULTATIONS WITH GOI.

2. FROM REF B: OUR POLICY CONTINUES TO REST ON:

A. THE FUNDAMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HOST GOVERNMENT FOR THE PROTECTION OF ALL PERSONS WITHIN ITS TERRITORIES;

B. THE HOST GOVERNMENT'S SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO DECIDE HOW IT WILL FULFILL THAT RESPONSIBILITY;

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C. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE US GOVERNMENT TO EXERT ALL APPROPRIATE EFFORTS FOR THE SAFETY OF ITS CITIZENS ABROAD;

D. THE IMPORTANCE OF DENYING SUCCESSES TO TERRORISTS, SO THAT INCENTIVES TO TERRORIST GROUPS TO SEIZE AMERICANS AND OTHERS ABROAD WILL BE MINIMIZED;

E. THE CONSEQUENT IMPORTANCE OF THE US NOT ONLY REFUSING, ITSELF, TO PAY RANSOM, RELEASE PRISONERS OR OTHERWISE YIELD TO TERRORIST BLACKMAIL, BUT ALSO OF OUR NOT BEING ASSOCIATED WITH, OR ENCOURAGING, DECISIONS OR ARRANGEMENTS BY OTHERS TO ACCEDE TO TERRORIST DEMANDS.

3. THESE OFTEN CONFLICTING CONSIDERATIONS AND OBJECTIVES CAN PRESENT DIFFICULT ISSUES REQUIRING RAPID DECISION THOUGH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ANTICIPATE AND ESTABLISH GUIDELINES FOR ALL CIRCUMSTANCES, THE FOLLOWING SHOULD HELP TO ENSURE ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING AND EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF APPROVED US POLICIES FOR HANDLING ABDUCTIONS OF US CITIZENS ABROAD:

A. IF A PRIVATE AMERICAN COMPANY, FAMILY OR INDIVIDUAL APPEARS TO BE CONSIDERING MEETING A RANSOM DEMAND, THE US WILL ADOPT A NEUTRAL STANCE.

B. IF CONTACT IS NOT ESTABLISHED WITH THE ABDUCTORS OR DISCUSSIONS OR NEGOTIATIONS WITH THEM ARE NOT BEING EFFECTIVELY PURSUED, THE US MAY NOMINATE AN INTERMEDIARY WHOM IT BELIEVES MIGHT FACILITATE HOST GOVERNMENT-ABDUCTOR CONTACT AND NEGOTIATIONS OR EMPLOYER/FAMILY-ABDUCTOR CONTACT AND NEGOTIATIONS. SUCH ACTION WILL BE TAKEN ONLY ON THE BASIS OF EXPLICIT WASHINGTON AUTHORITY.
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C. IF THE LIFE OF A HOSTAGE APPEARS IN SUCH IMMINENT DANGER AS NOT TO ALLOW TIME FOR THE COURSE OF ACTION IN (B) ABOVE, OR IF THE INTERMEDIARY'S EFFORTS PROVE UNSUCCESSFUL, OR IF NOMINATION OF AN INTERMEDIARY DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE A PROMISING COURSE OF ACTION, THE US MAY ITSELF CONDUCT DISCUSSIONS WITH THE ABDUCTORS AT THEIR OR US INITIATIVE, IN ORDER TO OPEN A DIALOGUE WITH THEM. THE DIALOGUE WILL BE LIMITED TO SUCH MATTERS AS THE WELL-BEING OF THE HOSTAGE AND HUMANITARIAN AND OTHER FACTORS ARGUING FOR THE HOSTAGE'S UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE. A DIALOGUE MAY BE INITIATED ONLY WITH (1) EXPLICIT WASHINGTON APPROVAL; (2) THE APPROVAL OR ACQUIESCENCE OF THE HOST GOVERNMENT; AND, (3) ON THE CLEAR UNDERSTANDING THAT THE US GOVERNMENT'S READINESS TO TREAT WITH THE ABDUCTORS INVOLVES NO MODIFICATION OF OUR POLICY REGARDING NON-PAYMENT OF RANSOM, RELEASE OF PRISONERS OR OTHER SUBMISSION TO BLACKMAIL.

D. THE US MAY AVAIL ITSELF OF THE ASSISTANCE OF ANOTHER GOVERNMENT WHICH IS WILLING AND ABLE TO SEEK INFORMATION ON THE HOSTAGE'S WHEREABOUTS AND WELFARE AND/OR TO FACILITATE DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE US AND THE ABDUCTORS. THIS

WILL BE DONE ONLY (1) WITH EXPLICIT WASHINGTON APPROVAL,
AND (2) ON THE CLEAR UNDERSTANDING THAT THE US GOVERN-

MENT'S READINESS TO TREAT WITH THE ABDUCTORS INVOLVES NO
MODIFICATION OF OUR POLICY REGARDING NON-PAYMENT OF RANSOM,
RELEASE OF PRISONERS OR OTHER SUBMISSION TO BLACKMAIL. VANCE

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